



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region



## TECHNICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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October 1999

### *History of Coastal Alabama Natural Gas Exploration and Development Final Report*

#### OCS Study MMS 99-0031

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the availability of a new study report, *History of Coastal Alabama Natural Gas Exploration and Development, Final Report*.

This report provides a detailed account of the exploration and development of gas prospects in coastal Alabama. The process began with the 1969 leasing by Mobil Oil Company of four tracts in lower Mobile Bay. Following a nine-year regulatory delay, Mobil spudded a well on November 17, 1978, and encountered natural gas in the Norphlet Formation on November 28. This began an era of Norphlet development that has lasted into the 1990's and which has involved Mobil, Exxon, Union, Chevron, and Shell. Through 1997, 75 Norphlet wells were drilled in State and Federal waters off coastal Alabama with a 71 percent success ratio. Production rates are high, averaging 1.02 billion cubic feet per day for 1997, up from previous years and still climbing. Norphlet gas is a hot, sour, high pressure, corrosive mixture of methane, hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide, and free water. Dealing with it is difficult, dangerous, and expensive, and requires specialized technologies for production, dehydration, pipelines, and processing. The frontier nature of the Norphlet geology and the associated production, engineering, and technology challenges in many ways parallel the equally daunting but different challenges of Alaska's harsh, remote locale. Only a few of the major oil and gas companies could afford the billions of dollars and years of lead times necessary to bring the Norphlet into production.

For more information about the Environmental Studies Program, contact the Environmental Sciences Section (MS 5430), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, telephone (504) 736-2789.

You can obtain copies of the report from the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, at a charge of \$10.00 by referencing OCS Study MMS 99-0031. You will be able to obtain this report also from the National Technical Information Service in the near future. Here are the addresses. You may also inspect copies at selected Federal Depository Libraries.

Minerals Management Service  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region  
Public Information Office (MS 5034)  
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394  
Telephone requests may be placed at  
(504) 736-2519, 1-800-200-GULF, or  
FAX: (504) 736-2620  
INTERNET: <http://www.mms.gov>

U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Technical Information Service  
5285 Port Royal Road  
Springfield, Virginia 22161  
(703) 487-4650 or FAX: (703) 321-8547  
Rush Orders: 1-800-336-4700

MMS is the Federal Agency that manages the Nation's oil and gas and other mineral resources on the OCS and collects, accounts for, and last year disbursed about \$6 billion in revenues from Federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

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MMS's Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>